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PREPARING FOR THE NATIVITY

The Nativity Lent began on November 15/28. Seven days later, on November 21/December 4, we celebrate the Entrance of the Virgin into the Temple. It is often called the "feast of anticipation" as we are told in the tropar: "Today is the foreshadowing of God's goodwill and the heralding of the prophecy of the salvation of men. The Virgin appears openly in the temple of God and announces Christ to all. So let us cry to her with loud voices: Rejoice, O Virgin, you are the fulfillment of the Creator's providence."

On December 6/19 we are given an example in St. Nicholas who was a good and faithful servant and worker in the vineyard of Christ. We are to strive to follow his example of generosity and concern for his fellow man. Again, the tropar teaches us. "The sincerity of your deeds has revealed you to people as a teacher of moderation, a model of faith, and an example of virtue. Therefore, you attained greatness through humility, and wealth through poverty. O Father Nicholas ask Christ our God to save our souls."

On the two Sundays preceding the Nativity we hear a long list of names read from Matthew 1:1-25. Two Sundays before the Nativity we commemorate all the patriarchs who lived before and after Moses received the Ten Commandments, all the prophets who preached the coming of Christ from Samuel to Zacharias, all the people who were justified by faith in the coming of Christ, the three Holy Children (who prefigured the Trinity) and Daniel the Prophet who prophesied the coming of Christ as a judge.

On the Sunday before the Nativity we commemorate all the Old Testament saints from whose tribe Christ, by way of His incarnation, is related. The gospel reading for this Sunday tells us the Genealogy of Christ, The Epistle reading (Hebrews 11:9-40) commemorates the faith of the righteous ones, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and gives us an example which we must all strive for throughout this Lenten season.

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There was great rejoicing
On this Christmas morning,
O'er the manger,
softly glowing,
The bright star was shining.
Christ was born in glory,
Of the Virgin Mary,
Let us humbly,
like the shepherds,
Kneel in adoration.

THE IKONOSTAS

The ikonostas is a partition or self-standing wall of various heights which separates the sanctuary (altar) from the nave or main part of the Orthodox Church building.

In the sanctuary everything is symbolic of the invisible, heavenly kingdom. The sanctuary is always usually elevated a few steps above the body of the church. This elevated area with its throne (altar table), table of oblation (on the side of the sanctuary and is used for preparing the offering - bread), and ark (for the reserved sacrament) and all other instruments help us to comprehend the heavenly state.

The body of the church, on the other hand, is earth or the visible world. Our Saviour was incarnate as man for our salvation, then he ascended back to heaven.

This is manifested in the Liturgy during the Great Entrance which symbolizes the Lord coming to redeem us (from the north door of the ikonostasi) who are on earth and then being entombed after the crucifixion (when the doors are closed), which then proceeds to the final portion of the Liturgy symbolizing the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ.

The first Christians began to surround the Holy Doors and the wall with ikons to illustrate and depict these events for the benefit of the early masses of cathecumens who were being instructed in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition.

Fr. M. Buben, S.T.G.

OBSERVATION ON CARPATHIAN HERITAGE TOUR

Our tour to the Carpathians was so planned that we were free to attend church services on two Sundays. The first, we spent in the Cathedral in Sanok, Poland; the second, in the village of Novo-Davidkovo, Ukraine.

On Saturday, the day after our arrival, we tried to find the villages of many of the tour members. Unfortunately, some of the villages were so completely destroyed that even a marker could not be found. Other villages had been destroyed except for a handful of houses. New houses had been built on the crossroads. There were villages which could not be reached by bus. The road leading to it was too narrow and rutted.

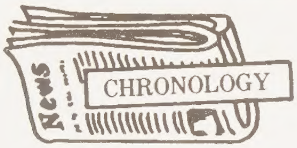
On our way to search for the villages, we stopped at the church in Gorlice. This had been the site of the Canonization of St. Maksym four years ago. It was Saturday morning. When we arrived we found the church overflowing with people. It was difficult to work our way through to the nave. There were many people standing outdoors, no talking, all facing the church. The choir sang beautifully; the services were served slowly and clearly, which brought tears to many of our eyes. We could not help but contrast this honoring of a saint who was recognized about the same time as was St. Alexis in America. Unfortunately, St. Alexis has been put into the calendar and seemingly forgotten.

Sunday morning, we attended services in Sanok. Again, the church was overflowing. The series of services started at 8 and did not finish until about 1:30 p.m. Again, the people patiently stood through all the services. Obviously, their comprehension of the worship of God and ours differs greatly. Here (U.S.) most parishes strive to complete the Divine Liturgy in an hour – like a TV show and generally have no other services.

The following Sunday in the village, we found much the same situation. Our bus

(Continued on Page 45, Col. 1)

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DECEMBER

A DIRECTIVE CONCERNING CONFESSION is to be sent to all parishes and missions of the Antiochian Archdiocese. The Mystery of Confession is to be taught, encouraged and regularly practiced by the clergy and laity; there is to be no "general" or "group" confession; there is to be no granting of absolution apart from a private confession of sins; the times during which confessions will be heard ought not cause the sacrament to be rushed through or hurried because of time constraints.

SCOBA IS NOW IN HIATUS. The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas has been without a chairman since Archbishop Iakovos retired in July of 1996. Metropolitan Philip is vice-chairman of the organization and in this capacity called for an election meeting to be held in May. All members were present except Archbishop Spyridon of the Greek Archdiocese. Fr. Dragas of that Archdiocese said that jurisdiction over all Orthodox Christians "in barbarian lands" belongs exclusively to the Ecumenical Patriarchate and that as an exarch of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Archbishop Spyridon will not permit an election (which means he would be ex-officio chairman of SCOBA without an election).

RUSSIAN PROVERB – The doctor performs miracles if God works them for him.

A SONG TOUR OF CARPATHO-RUS is a 74-minute video with 42 songs from different eras. Jerry Jumba arranged the music, performed by an 8-piece orchestra, 12-voice choir, and soloist Beata Begeniova. Send $23 to Jerry Jumba, 312 Hamilton St., McKees Rocks, PA 15136 or call 412/771-1662.

MOSCOW: President Yeltsin has signed a law protecting the status of the Russian Orthodox Church along with Judaism, Islam and Buddhism. The Russian legislature passed the law 358 to 6 in the lower house and unanimously in the upper house.

INCENSE is needed in Eastern Europe Churches. We usually take much with us as gifts. You can send 1 pound of incense and 100 briquettes of charcoal to a specific church for $25. Send for info and declaration, order blank to PAC, 230 West Parkway, Unit #9, Pompton Plains, NJ 07444.

THE NAVAL AIR FACILITY in Adak, Alaska on the remote Aleutian island was turned over to civilians. On Pascha over 100 Orthodox packed the former chapel for a reader service. Adak was a Cold War strategic site and was home to thousands of military and dependents. Since Pascha, Navy Chaplain Jerome Cwiklinski has held Divine Liturgy in St. Innocent Chapel. Interesting that up to this time no Orthodox service had ever been held here.

A NEW ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL was dedicated in May in Novosibirsk in Siberia in Russia. Seminarians (7) from the newly-opened seminary were joined by seminarians from European Russia to sing the Mass. The foundation stone was taken from the tomb of St. Peter in Rome and blessed by the Pope.

TWO VOLUMES OF "Martyrs, Confessors and Heroes of Piety of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Twentieth Century, Biographies and relevant materials" have been published in Tver, Russia. Hieromonk Damaskin (Orlovsky) researched hereto inaccessible materials including the archives of the KGB and its predecessors (CHEKA, NKVD, GPU, etc.). During the 20th century, the Russian Orthodox Church has had more martyrs and confessors than in any time in history. It is likely that all names will not be found, but research like this is bringing a new hagiography.

CONSTRUCTION OF A CHURCH in Privolnoye has been helped by a donation of $5,000 by Mikhail Gorbachev. This is his home town.

THE THIRD EDITION of a Directory of Orthodox Parishes and Institutions will be published early 1998. The other two were published in 1991 and 1994. For info on inclusion or to purchase, contact: OCCN, PO Box 1128, Torrance, CA 90505.

THE LAST HYMN sung at the funeral of Princess Diana was taken from the Orthodox funeral service. It was put to the music of Taverner, a well-known composer in England, who is a convert to the Orthodox faith and has composed much music for Orthodox services. His records can be purchased from Musica Russica, OH, 27 Willow Lane, Dept. C, Madison, CT 06443 or from the many Orthodox bookstores, which sell cassettes and CDs.

SEVERAL RING ROADS circle Moscow. A bronze statue of Our Lady by the Moscow sculptor Frid Sogoyan has been erected on the ring road close to a new chapel of St. George. This is unusual, as religious art in Orthodox tradition tends to be two-dimensional.

THE DEFINITIVE LATIN EDITION of the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" contains over 100 adjustments to the original text, including clearer presentations of liturgical and sacramental practices in the Eastern-rite churches.

AT THE WORLD FORUM OF UKRAINIANS IN KIEV, Bishop Husar of the Ukrainian Catholic Church said that "unifying the various Christian confessions in Ukraine is an almost impossible task... When the idea of a single confession is the focus of discussion, inevitably each church ends up stating "then come to us." Seems to also apply to the unification of Orthodox Churches in America.

STARTING IN THE MIDWEST about 10 years ago was the parish nurse field. It reclaims the old tradition of the church to follow Luke 9:2: "He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick." Parish nurses help people to gain access to care, can teach health management, disease and treatment options and the relationship between faith and health. They are not hands-on but resource persons.

PROSPHORA SEALS ARE DIFFICULT TO FIND, especially those that are hand-carved in basswood. Special orders can be made or a 2x2 inch seal can be ordered for $12.50 PP from David Mastroberte, 67 Lake Lane, East Stroudsburg, PA 18301.

•Observations On Tour

arrived following the first service: then we entered the huge church in Novo Davidkovo, where a place was reserved for us. The Hours were being read. Divine Liturgy was followed by a General Moleben, followed by a panachida for those who had died within the last 40 days, followed by a moleben to the Mother of God and the blessing of the Ikon of the Pochaev Mother of God, which had been installed above the Royal Doors and was lowered for veneration. Since most people lived within short walking distance to the church, they went home between some of the services, especially while the priest was doing the proskomidia (preparing the wine and bread for communion).

When this was discussed with some friends when we arrived home, they said: "They have nothing else to do so they attend church." This is not true as most of them have TV and they do have their chores with the animals, and much more. Perhaps, the restriction of religion for so many years and the conflicts still existing have them treasuring the opportunity for worship of God. They know how empty their lives were without Him. We are too influenced by Western church. Church attendance is an obligation, to be finished as quickly as possible.

•Preparing for the Nativity

This epistle reading is considered so important that various verses from it are read not only on this Sunday before Christmas but also on the first Sunday of Great Lent and the Sunday after Pentecost, which is dedicated to All Saints.

THE ADVENTURE OF BATTLE

We must take seriously the deceptions that are launched at us whether they come from satan and his cohorts or from our own passions, which we have not yet mastered, or from other people, who are often prone to be as deceived as we are.

This is why in his Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul reminds us how necessary it is to be relying upon our Lord, Who is also our Friend, our Guide, and our peerless Teacher. He writes in (6:10): "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."

At the time St. Paul wrote this letter, he was chained by the wrist to a Roman soldier 24 hours a day. The soldier's armour gave him an idea. The Christian also has his armour and so part by part St. Paul takes the armour of the Roman soldier and translates it into Christian terms. He uses this to show that Christians must exercise effort to master their passions and realize their potential as beloved children of God.

People of the time believed implicitly in evil spirits who filled the air and were determined to do people harm. So he uses the terms for the different classes of evil spirits in the following verse (6:12): "We are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."

Sometimes, even in this day, we may make the mistake of thinking that it is impossible for us to overcome satan (the evil spirits) and his minions. This is absolutely wrong. Jesus' victory is final and conclusive! He has done all for our salvation. However, we also must do all that we can to make this precious gift our own. We must exercise effort to receive it, to preserve it and to develop it to its full potential.

Fr. Ihor Kutash, Ph.D.

SANTA CLAUS

One of the most important parts of Christmas, in the eyes of children, is Santa Claus. To most of them, his coming is probably more significant than the coming of the Lord. And to many of them he is probably more real than Jesus.

There is a famous statue that shows Santa, hat in hand, with one knee bent, peering with wonder into the crib of the Infant Jesus. In its own touching way, this sculpture helps to put the figure of Santa in a proper relationship to the Jesus the Lord.

In our efforts to decommercialize Christmas, we need to be realistic about the pressures children are under with respect to gifts and Santa. We cannot condemn nor blot out this part of the season.

Rather, we might view Santa in terms of his goodness and generosity, values which Jesus came to teach. At the same time, we can place more emphasis on the fact that Christmas is Jesus' birthday, and that Santa Claus bringing gifts is one more way we celebrate God's greatest gift, the gift of His Son.

Do most of your Christmas decorations, cards, customs, etc. show Jesus as the most important part of the Holy Day?

•Kitchen Corner

Carefully pour in 1/4 cup water. Allow to come to boil. Add rest of sugar. When sugar has dissolved, add honey and spices. Allow to come to boil. Let cool. Sift flour. Measure out one cup which will be used to flour the board. Add 4 remaining cups to the caramelized sugar, butter, eggs, flour, baking soda and cream of tartar. Knead very well, adding more flour, if necessary, to make an elastic dough. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Roll out on floured board and make favorite cutouts. Stars, hearts and roosters are the traditional favorites. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes. You may ice or glaze these if you wish.

Some cooks add a bit of cardamom or crushed star anise.

SACRED SPACE

"In Isaiah 56:7 we read: "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Christ Himself repeated these words in Matt 21:13; Mk 11:17; Luke 19:46.

It is important for God's people to have a place which is set aside. Through the ages, God has moved people to build houses of prayer and praise and to consecrate space for the ministry of His holy Word and Sacraments.

God draws us near to Him as we worship. Whether we come alone or with others, whether we are in search of comfort and support, whether we rejoice, give thanks or ask for forgiveness and the blessings of God's healing power, the doors of the church stand open. It is our prayer and hope that as we worship, and as we strengthen the living and remember the dead, there will be peace in the church to all who enter it.

We should all work together, as the Body of Christ, to preserve the hope that in all earthly things we may behold the order and beauty of things heavenly. The Church is our Sacred Space – it is not meant to be a concert hall, theater, social hall, etc.

* * * * * *

"The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save, He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you in His love. He will rejoice over you with singing." (Zephaniah 3:17) PRAYER: "Lord, it's hard to conceive of You rejoicing and singing over me. If you are so happy with me, help me today to be happier myself."

WEEKLY MEDITATIONS

Dec. 7 - 25th Sunday after Pentecost. O Lord and Master, Jesus Christ our true God, grant us the ability to recognize the vocation to which You have called us. Instruct us how to use our time and talents for Your glory and that of Your Holy Church. May all Your children come to acknowledge Your sovereign power and Your call to be bound together in a communion of love. May we treat each other with charity in word and in deed. As we travel on the road of life, may we see You in the restless faces of those who are in need of spiritual and temporal help. May we walk in Your commandments all the days of our lives and inherit eternal life in the world to come. O Lord, our Teacher and Guide, show us the way to Your Kingdom and have mercy on us.

Dec. 14 - 26th Sunday after Pentecost. O Lord Jesus our Savior, You stand with us in our time of need, and never refuse to hear the prayer of those who call on You with a pure heart. Send Your holy angel to guard and keep us safe against any work of darkness. Grant us a repentant heart, humility, and not any excesses of earthly glory. In the hour of our death, take us by the hand, and welcome us into Your presence, where we will sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to You forever together with all the choirs of the heavenly hosts. O Lord, listen to the prayers offered to You with confidence, and have mercy on us.

Dec. 21 - 27th Sunday after Pentecost. O Jesus, Son of the Living God, we glorify You, we bless You, and we worship Your holy Name. You are the God of our salvation and You work wonders among Your people. Strengthen us with Your power that we may be able to withstand the wicked and deceitful attacks of the devil. Clothe us with spiritual armor to resist all evil, a breastplate to protect our hearts, a helmet to keep our reasoning pure, and a sword to slay the invisible serpents who only desire our ruin. Heal us from our infirmities and visit us from on high. O Lord, You are the One Who gives us strength in our moment of need, hear the supplications of Your unworthy servants, and have mercy on us.

Dec. 28 - 28th Sunday after Pentecost. O Our God, the heavens and the earth were created through Your word. All things both visible and invisible have their origin in You. You made us in Your image and likeness. When we disobeyed You, You did not cast us off forever into nothingness, but, in the fullness of time, You made it possible for the cleansing of our sings through the life-giving Cross. O, Christ, You renewed all the human race through Your life-giving Death and Resurrection. You have invited us to partake of Your Mystical Supper to renew our covenant with You, and to receive the pledge of eternal life. Grant us the healing of soul and body. We take shelter under Your protection, O God of heaven, and pray that You will have mercy on us.

Raymond Mastroberte
Iconographer and Cantor

ORTHODOX CASSETTE PROJECT

Cassettes containing the Sunday Gospel readings and meditations plus selected music sung in Slavonic are available for $5 each. A complete set can be ordered for $130. What an excellent Christmas gift for a shut-in, someone who lives a distance from an Orthodox Church or a lover of Russian acapella music.

For December we offer:

No. 22: Rare selections of English, Carpatho-Russian and Church Slavonic along with a teaching of the Mother of God. Side 2: Selections from the Divine Liturgy, many by the famous Bulgarian Obretenov Choir. No. 23: The Beatitudes and Cherubim song recorded in England. Selections from Kedrov, Rimsky Korsakoff (Our Father), and more. Side 2: Bortniansky's "Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord," and other numbers sung by the Yale Chorus.

From a letter received this month: "The music is good, but your meditations and talks are superb and inspirationally enriching."

Nova radost stala,
Jaka ne byvala,
Zvizda jasna
nad vertepom,
Svitu vozsijala.

Kol' Christos rodilsja,
Z D' ivy voplotilsja,
Jak čelovik,
pelenami,
Uboho povilsja.

ALASKA FUND

Helping to send copies of The Orthodox Herald to Alaska are: A.M. Fedec in memory of his great-uncle Fr. Andrew Fedetz, John Russian, Marie Derkasch, Anonymous, Myra Matichak, Annastazia Zahirsky, William Hudak.

Dabs of Thoughts

False friends are like our shadow, keeping close to us while we walk in the sunshine but leaving us when we cross into the shade.

A priest had been asked to leave a parish because he "made people very uncomfortable" by his supposedly "tactless" ways of talking and acting. When an older man was asked what this meant, his reply was: "His greatest 'sin' was not being tactless, what he did that offended people was that he not only made them look at themselves, but also made them see themselves as they really were."

There is a Catholic Church in Bethlehem near the place of the Birth of Christ where relics of the Holy Children martyrs (Matthew 2:16) are displayed behind a metal gate.

Motto of some perohi ladies: "Pinching for Jesus."

The official ensign of the Russian Navy was the flag of St. Andrew, a pale blue Cross of St. Andrew on a white field. The Holy Apostle Andrew was reputed to have journeyed into the lands that would one day become Russia. He became the Patron Saint of the Russian Navy.

Why is the verse "and was suffered and was buried" emphasized by so many choirs when they chant the Nicene Creed? Who started this?

The Orthodox faith first reached Australia in 1820, when a Russian Antarctic expedition was based in Sydney for several months.

The Nicene Creed was originally composed for us as a declaration of faith for converts to Christianity who recited it before Baptism. Later, during the time of the great heresies, the Church found it necessary to insert the Creed into the Eucharistic Divine Liturgy to test the beliefs and sincerity of those about to partake of Holy Communion.

Oil wells in Egypt were discovered as a result of a tip given in Exodus 2:3, which reads, "And daubed it with slime and with pitch." One of the directors of an oil company who read this passage figured that where there is pitch there must be oil. A number of oil wells are now on the ground where Moses was born.



EDITORS' NOTES

These past few months we have received many catalogues. We were offended by those which offered the nativity scene with either bears or cats instead of human figures.

Our Carpathian tour ended much too fast. We're hoping to rekindle some memories by viewing the 4 two-hour video tapes, which were taken by George Senitsky. If you are also interested in ordering a set, send $65 to PO Box 9, Hunlock Creek, PA 18621 by February 1. We will forward your order to him.

This is a nostalgic time of the year. The days are short and activities are cut back because of the weather; we sit and remember Christmases past. We remember people with whom we have shared Christmas: our families, our parish members, the young men in the services of our country. What a blessing!

What do we celebrate at Christmas? It is the Nativity of Jesus but it has a deeper meaning. We celebrate the union of God with humanity, the marvelous fact of the incarnation, the enfleshing of the divine. We are reminded that God continues to be present to us in the human face of others, especially those in need.

We are called to seek the fullness of reconciliation between God and the human race and among all people, the reconciliation that Christ came to achieve.

The message of Christmas is challenging and demanding, a call to respond fully to Christ who is present today and to prepare for the final coming. The Christ we must respond to is no longer the babe in the manger but the crucified and risen one seated at the right hand of the Father. The stable at Bethlehem is illuminated with the glory of Easter and that light casts the shadow of the cross over the whole scene.

If the nativity scene is overemphasized, Christmas may remain a mere historical pageant or a children's feast.

More recent trends like birthday cakes for the baby Jesus, while laudable attempts to involve children in the feast, also miss the true meaning of Christmas and tend to distort the celebration.

Christmas can be a rich and powerful feast for adults as well as for children if it celebrates not only the Christ of the past but also the Christ who is present today and the Christ still to come again.

Christ is Born! Christos Raźdaetsya!
Glorify Him! Slavite Ého!

The Stroyens

ETHNIC CHUCKLE

Dorohaya Tyotya Mareya,

Yak tam kolo vas? Toot shitko OK noh yah mam takee sore throat ee yah dumam zhe yah scrazuyou trying to make me staree hear me.

Me staree neh chuyeh dobree. Ohn neh admit do toho. Yah neh znam chee ohn mah hearing problemyu chee ohn tunes me out. Sometimes yah mushyu povestee yehmyu dva che tree times then yah starting to kretchatee. A ohn takee mad ee prosit chemuy yah hollering. Kolee yah kazhyu zhe yah already told him three times, ohn takee upset nah meneh, ee kazhe, "You think I'm deaf?"

Yah dumam what I gotta do? Yah neh mozhu tak zhetee. Finally, yah dumam zhe yah dam yehmyu dose of same medicine. Kolee ohn doh meney budey talking yah will tune him out ili budyu saying – what? what? Ohn neh lubit tot situation ee decided to ask his friend – takee neighborhood philosof shto he ought to do. Philosof skazal yemyu to try an experiment. Me husband bral yeho advice.

Tot vecher kolee yah peeling bandurkee nah supper standing with me pletchee doh rooma, me husband stood in the dining room dveree ee zvidaesa, "Can you hear me?"

Yah nech neh kazuh. Then ohn preshol a few steps closer ee asked, "Chewyesh menah?" Yah nech neh kazhuy no yah could hardly trematesa from laughing.

Then ohn preshol closer, "Can you hear me?" Again yah nech neh kazhu. Ohn panicoval – duma moshe yah barz hluha.

Then ohn stood close to me ee zvidaesya, "Hanya, chewyesh meney?" Yah very teeho answered – "For the fourth time – yes!"

Yah neh znam shto ohn ee philospf balakalee – noh me husband make appointment in ear clinic.

Budte Zdrove
Shouting Hanya

JOY TO THE WORLD

"Joy to the world - the Lord has come!" We will hear this message many times during this Christmas season. What is this joy? How and where do we see it?

Unfortunately, Church people are apt to think that joy has no place in the Church. When we have this attitude, we succeed only in becoming ponderous and then boring. Being boring, we have lost the opportunity to tell the truths about God to the people with whom we may be talking.

It is our belief that the priesthood should have dignity. We also believe that every person is entitled to self-respect and the respect of his fellows but it is disturbing to find the Church becoming the ponderous!

As one looks at one's own spiritual life, one realizes that there are many difficult and perplexing problems one has to face. These ought to be faced seriously. On the other hand, the great truths of the Christian religion ought to make us joyful and happy and enthusiastic about facing life.

If your religion is giving you happiness generally, then you are practicing it effectively. If you are always dour and depressed, then you ought to consult a spiritual adviser in order that you may know the joy of religion.

PRESS FUND

We thank you for your encouraging notes and letters and for your concern that we continue publishing. Every gift is appreciated. Thank you/Spasebo.

Eva Harris, Anna Borovoy, Helen Klemm, Stella Kadingo, Marie Derkasch, Dora Daley, Andrew Fedetz, Allen Lucas, Myra Matichak, Mary Ann Carmack, Anonymous, Helen Lesko, Emil Sekerak, Sophie Coggins, William Hudak, Betty Zbegner, Olga Chernik, Mindora Burkhardt, John Russian, Jim Zeleniak, Irene Allen, Helen Billak, Stephen Shufran, Mary Kochmaruk, Mary Pysarchyk, Rosemary Hill, Nancy Collins, Thomas Drosdak, Annastazia Zahirsky.

Helen Cudlic in memory of a friend. George Fritch in memory of departed family members. Eva Armstrong in memory of brother Dimitri Adamovich. In memory of Gbur family. Helen Derbak in memory of her husband. Frank Pelak in memory of Pelak family: Phillip, Anna, Helen, Paul, Eva, Frank Pelak, Eva Replyuk, The Tyrpak family, Al Musso, John Sabarnia. Helen Chura Nowasadko for the health of Fr. and Matushka Stroyen, Fr. Basil Micek in memory of Fr. Adam Krell. Johanna Wagner in memory of parents - Mary and Stephen Feltovich. Carpathian Tour members for restoration of health of Jean Walko who was injured in an accident.



In many Orthodox homes, the meal for the eve of Christmas was more important than food on Christmas Day itself. There were leftovers from the 12-course evening meal and that was served on Christmas itself with some added meat. It was impossible to find any set menu for Christmas, but there were always the honey cookies. There are many recipes for this spicy treat. It is called either pryaniki or medianyki. They were formed in wooden molds or rolled out and cut in different shapes. They were baked starting early in December and stored in a tight container. They improved as they ripened. The molds were passed down in families and hung on the kitchen wall between use. Many can now be found in museums.

Pyraniki were often given as gifts to sweethearts and young girls were given a "secret" recipe with their dowry. They were also available at religious pilgrimages where small religious items would be applied to them with the glaze. These were brought home as gifts. There are many recipes for pryniki but this one makes a cookie much like the one we purchased at a rest stop on the road from St. Petersburg to Moscow many years ago.

PRYNIKI (HONEY SPICE COOKIES)

5 cups flour	1 teas. baking soda
2 cups sugar	1/4 teas. cream of tartar
1 cup honey	1/2 teas. cloves
1/2 cup butter	1/4 teas. cinnamon
2 eggs	1/4 teas. nutmeg

Melt one tablespoon sugar in a large heavy skillet and allow to caramelize.

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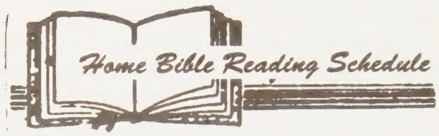
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DECEMBER 1997

1. 2 Thess 1:1-10	18. 1 Tim 6:17-21
2. 2 Thess 1:10-2:2	19. 2 Tim 1:1-2, 8-18
3. 2 Thess 2:1-12	20. Gal 5:22-6:2
4. 2 Thess 2:13-3:5	21. **Eph 6:10-17**
5. 2 Thess 3:6-18	22. 2 Tim 2:20-26
6. Gal 1:3-10	23. 2 Tim 3:16-4:4
7. **Eph 6:10-17**	24 2 Tim 4:9-22
8. 1 Tim 1:1-7	25. Heb 13:17-21
9. 1 Tim 1:8-14	26. Titus 1:15-2:10
10. 1 Tim 1:18-20, 2:8-15	27. Eph 1:16-23
	28. **Col 1:12-18**
11. 1 Tim 3:1-13	29. Heb 3:5-11, 17-19
12. 1 Tim 4:4-8, 16	30. Heb 4:1-13
13. 1 Cor 4:9-16	31. Heb 5:11-6:8
14. **Eph 5:9-19**	Entry into the Temple: 21 Nov/4 Dec
15. 1 Tim 5:1-10	
16. 1 Tim 5:11-21	St. Nicholas 6/19
17. 1 Tim 5:22-6:1	

BIBLE STUDY

Unless we constantly keep before us the singular goal of keeping our spiritual life strong, we can easily be distracted by worldly influences. This reminds us of a story about a man who bought a new hunting dog. Eager to see how he would perform, he took him out one day, hoping to track down big game. No sooner had they gotten into the woods than the animal picked up the trail of a bear. Excitedly, the hunter followed close behind. Then suddenly the dog stopped, sniffed the ground, and headed in a different direction. He had caught the smell of a deer that had crossed the path of the bear. A few moments later he halted again, this time captivated by the scent of a rabbit that had crossed the path of the deer. And so, on and on it went until finally the breathless hunter caught up with his dog, only to find him barking triumphantly down the hole of a field mouse.

Many start out with the high resolve of keeping spiritual things, as taught in the Orthodox Church, first in their lives. But it isn't long before their whole attention is diverted to things of temporal importance. One pursuit leads to another until they have strayed far from their original purpose. Apparently, this is what happened to one of St. Paul's companions in our reading for the 24th (2 Tim 4:9-22) for he wrote to Timothy, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world."

If the hunter's dog is a picture of you, chasing some insignificant goal of wealth, power prestige, or pleasure, turn from all these worldly distractions and dedicate your life anew to the Lord.

WHAT MATTERS

On the night when the wondrous birth of Jesus took place in the little hill village in Judea, the things that loomed large in the minds of most people were things that were noticed or made noise for a short while on the earth. There was the decree of Caesar Augustus, "that all the world should be registered" which meant that everyone had to go to his hometown to be counted in the census. This resulted in crowded roads and towns with travelers; there were other matters of more localized interest which elicited earnest discussion. All this that seemed so important at the time was of no consequence to anyone a few years later.

But that God, on that night, quietly reached down from heaven and intervened in the fate of mankind – that changed the history of the world and is still the ground of the only hope of everyone and the only source of peace for their souls.

As we go our way through life, the noise, the distractions, the stresses and the tumult of events in our everyday material world beat on our ears and bid for our attention. It is right that we concern ourselves with them. But when all is said and done, our highest destiny and our most precious goods are not at stake in any changes of earthly circumstances.

It is when God enables us to become children again at the manger of His own Child – it is then that we find ourselves in the presence of that which really matters and which is able to give meaning and purpose to our lives and rest and peace to our souls.

THE BABAS TAUGHT ME

It is wrong to chew gum in church. Makes one wonder what brand of gum some people prefer as they chew it for the whole Divine Liturgy.

It is also wrong to bring crackers, cookies, cereal and other snacks to church for the young children. Who would have thought thirty years ago that a mess of crumbs and tissues would be left in the pew and on the floor for others to clean up?

Jesus did say for little children to come to Him but should we extend it to this happening in church? I wonder if He meant them to come to Him in the Temple during services?

MISSION FUND

Helping to do "mission" work are: John Russian, Myra Matichak, Elsie McAllister, Annastazia Zahirsky, William Hudak.